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May 1, 1956

22.8.
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
20 COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH EVALUATION

3
Guide for Task Group Reports

The outline which follows is provided as a guide for task groups and for use in preparation of their reports to CORE. Most, if not all, of the items will be applicable to all task groups. A member of CORE will serve as contact for each task group to assist in problems of interpretation that may arise. All task groups should feel free to comment upon any aspects of the program not covered in this guide if they believe such comments are pertinent and significant.

Emphasis should be placed on adequacy of present program, need for program shifts, existence of gaps in program, need for expansion or curtailment of program, and opportunities for expediting progress through more vigorous cooperation and other means.

1. Nature, scope, and objectives of present research.

- a. Statement of the task group's definition of the field to be covered under the general objective.

This statement, developed in collaboration with the CORE contact, should define the scope and amplify the specific research aims under the overall objective, to serve as a guide for operation of the task group. It should recognize the segments of the overall objective and any significant relationships between the field being considered and those of other task groups.

- b. Problems under study.

Delineate or classify, by problem areas, the research being carried on, and indicate how the research in each area contributes to the overall objective.

- c. Organizational participation.

Indicate the agencies within the Department that are carrying on research in each problem area and the nature and extent of cooperative relationships among these agencies and between these agencies and non-Department groups.

- d. Research not cooperative with the Department.

Indicate briefly, and to the extent information is readily available, how other research (e.g. industrial, institutional) supplements the Department's research in achieving the overall objective.

2. Evaluation of present research.

a. Importance of the problem.

Indicate relative importance of each problem area and of the various segments within each area. Is there appropriate balance between basic and applied research and adequate effort devoted to methodology? Does the present program have the various segments of the research in proper perspective and relation as to present importance, order of attack, and emphasis? What are the gaps, if any, in the present program?

b. Progress toward the objective.

Evaluate the progress or lack of progress of the research in each problem area in meeting and solving problems involved in the overall objective (use brief, selected, recent examples); prospects for further progress; segments of the research likely to be more fruitful or less fruitful and why.

c. Coordination of efforts.

Indicate the extent to which the efforts of the agencies that are doing research on these problems are all aimed at the overall objective. Cite specific instances of deviation, conflict or duplication, if any. Indicate the extent to which the Department and non-Department agencies concerned with these problems effectively coordinate their efforts.

d. Effectiveness of application of results.

Indicate how the results of the research are intended to be used or applied and by whom. Point out any instances in which the application of results is accelerated by effective education, interpretation, group action or other factors or impeded by lack of adequate attention to such factors.

3. Suggested changes to achieve a more adequate program.

a. Balance in relation to other research activities.

Indicate whether research under this general objective should be given greater or less emphasis than it is now receiving: - (1) under present appropriation levels, (2) under an expanded program in line with recent estimates of long-range research needs.

b. Suggested curtailment.

Indicate by problem areas any segments of work which should be dropped or curtailed, and the resources shifted to other research in order to achieve more effectively the overall objective. Give reasons for these recommendations.

c. Suggested expansion or initiation of research.

Indicate by problem areas any of the present segments of work which should be expanded, or new work which should be initiated in order to help achieve the overall objective: (1) under present appropriation levels, (2) under an expanded research program in line with recent estimates of long-range research needs. Give reasons for these recommendations.

d. Proper role of USDA and cooperating agencies.

To what extent can the Department withdraw from research in some problem areas now being handled effectively by other agencies? What problem areas should receive more, and what areas less, Federal research participation? Indicate changes needed for furthering the research program by improved cooperation, including such aspects as:- exchange of information on current research; work planning conferences; coordination of research between agencies; cooperative documents and agreements.

e. Improvement in relations between research and action agencies.

Indicate changes needed for aiding research agencies in becoming aware of action agency problems, in facilitating research to solve these problems, and in accelerating application of research results in their solution. Comments should include suggested means for implementing or improving joint review of research progress, joint evaluation and testing (field, plant scale, etc.) of research results, and joint planning of new research.

4. Anticipated impact of the research under this objective.

Appraise briefly the probable main effects of this Department's research over the next 5 and 20 years, taking into account anticipated developments resulting from research outside the Department.

Indicate concretely the benefits the research makes possible: (1) to farmers - e.g., through reducing costs of production or marketing, reducing risks, increasing demand for farm products, increasing income per capita of farm people, raising rural levels of living; and (2) to

the nation as a whole - e.g., through providing more adequate or cheaper supplies of foods or other products of agricultural origin, improving nutrition, improving the quality or variety of products available, reducing Government expenditures and taxes, promoting national prosperity or higher levels of living for people generally, providing protection in case of national emergency.

Indicate problems that must be dealt with if the full potential benefits of the results are to be realized, or steps that must be taken if possible dislocation or harmful effects to certain groups are to be offset. Consider such factors as: implications for agricultural manpower requirements and for economic size of farms, capital requirements and technical or managerial competence of farmers; impact upon production and upon the achievement of balanced output; changes required in market organization or practices; effect on the number and size of processing and marketing firms, and the competitive structure of the industries involved.

5. Obstacles to achieving an adequate research program and suggestions for overcoming them.

Consider limitations in manpower and research facilities, restrictions due to policy, legislative and administrative actions, budgetary procedures, and any other factors.





